

The Bridge

ISSUE
09
NOVEMBER
2013

A monthly newsletter for educators from the
New Jersey Department of Education



In this Issue

The leaves are changing to beautiful shades of gold, orange and deep red, and the temperatures are dropping into the 50's and below – sure signs that Fall is upon us.

With the first marking period almost completed, we wanted to continue to provide you with AchieveNJ updates. Specifically, the article focuses on Educator Feedback Loops, SGOs, Evaluation of Staff, and Evaluation Component and Summative Scoring information. More specific detail is available in the article.

In addition, congratulations goes to Kathleen Assini, the 2013–2014 State Teacher of the Year. Ms. Assini is a social studies teacher from Delsea Regional Middle and High School in Gloucester County. You will learn more about Ms. Assini in this newsletter.

Another area that is included in this issue is special education. Please read the article entitled, “Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities with ‘Whole-School’ Initiatives.” There are four tiers or strategies available in this initiative. Read on to find out more.

Also, don't forget to check out the News, Upcoming Events and Professional Development Opportunities.

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AchieveNJ Updates

The Department distributed broadcast memos on October 22 and November 6 with several important updates on the new evaluation and support system. Here is a brief summary of the material – please read the [full memo](http://www.nj.gov/education/geninfo/faq/faq_eval_sgo.shtml) (http://www.nj.gov/education/geninfo/faq/faq_eval_sgo.shtml) for more details:

- **Educator Feedback Loop:** Several support structures are in place to ensure that educators are involved with implementing new evaluations — and have clear channels through which to communicate questions, concerns, and feedback. In general, communications should flow through the following channels:



- **Information on Student Growth Objectives (SGOs):** In response to a number of common questions about SGOs received by the Department, we have posted a list of Frequently Asked Questions (http://www.nj.gov/education/geninfo/faq/faq_eval_sgo.shtml) (FAQs) to the AchieveNJ website. If the answer to an inquiry is not found within or is not answered by a review of the [SGO web page](http://www.state.nj.us/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/objectives.shtml) (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/objectives.shtml>), please send the question directly to the Office of Evaluation at educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us.
- **Evaluation of Specialists, Directors, and Other Staff:** Over the past year, the Department has worked with teams of accomplished professionals from several groups representing educators in specialized roles, including the Athletic Trainers' Society of New Jersey (ATSNJ), the New Jersey School Counselors Association (NJSCA), and the New Jersey Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NJSHA). This collaboration has resulted in the creation of role-specific evaluation instruments that districts may choose to adopt. While the Department does not require the use of these instruments, we support the educator groups in their efforts to promote the use of tools that address the specific job responsibilities of their members. As the Department continues to develop guidance for staff members in specialized roles, we will continue to learn from these groups and their partner districts during their first year of utilizing these evaluation instruments, which are listed below:

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Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities with ‘Whole-School’ Initiatives

One of the unintended results of the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (originally titled the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) was that students identified as eligible for special education and related services under the IDEA began to take on a separate identity. Teachers have become either general education teachers or special education teachers. Students are identified as either general education students or special education students. In some cases, special education is viewed as a *place* rather than a *service* to support students’ learning of the academic and other skills they need to move successfully into higher education or employment.

Educators and families have been attempting to bridge that divide over the years through a variety of initiatives. Recent reform efforts such as implementation of the Common Core State Standards, development of challenging assessments and implementation of accountability systems for teachers provide opportunities for educators and families to build educational systems that are inclusive of all learners from the early stages of change, not as a supplement after changes are in place.

There are a number of systems and strategies that schools can use to improve instruction and achievement for students with a vast array of learning challenges. A tiered system of support, co-teaching, an inclusion initiative and professional learning communities are four of those systems or strategies that facilitate holding the same high expectations for all students and providing the scaffolds and supports that any student needs to learn. For a student with a disability, these systems can identify and/or provide a context for the supports that will be part of the student’s IEP.

Tiered System of Support

Tiered systems of supports, also known as *Response to Intervention (RTI) systems* or *Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)* are school-based systems that are designed to identify students at risk of academic difficulty and provide immediate instructional and/or behavioral supports. Tiered systems typically include screening in reading, writing and math for all



students, multi-level interventions, monitoring of progress through ongoing assessment and review and adjustment of interventions based on data (The National RTI Center at <http://www.rti4success.org>).

The National Center on RTI defines three levels of prevention/intervention that are often included in a tiered system of support:

- **Level 1** focuses on offering high quality instruction designed to meet the needs of all students in all classrooms. The principles of universal design for learning (UDL) provide a framework for teachers to achieve this using multiple methods of representation of content, multiple means of student engagement and multiple ways in which students can express what they have learned (www.cast.org).
- **Level 2** involves short term, small group evidence-based interventions (typically 10 to 15 weeks of 20-40 minute sessions, three to four times per week) for students identified through screening or progress monitoring. Interventions should be selected based on performance data and implemented with fidelity.
- **Level 3** involves intensive, individualized interventions for students who have not responded to level 2 interventions. Some of the students who require level three interventions may have IEPs, but some may not. Interventions are provided in small groups as a supplement to core instruction for most students. The *National Center on Intensive Intervention* (<http://www.intensiveintervention.org>), funded by the US Department of Education, is a resource for information regarding this level of intervention.

In New Jersey schools, the *Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) system* can serve as the basis for implementing a tiered system of supports. Information regarding the I&RS process can be found at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/irs/>.

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Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities with ‘Whole-School’ Initiatives *(continued from p. 2)*

Co-Teaching

Another strategy that has facilitated an integrated approach to instruction is **co-teaching**. In New Jersey schools, this is implemented in an “in-class resource program.” The model was designed as a mechanism for delivering special education; however, the model benefits both students with and without IEPs. Co-teaching pairs a general and a special educator to collaboratively plan, deliver and assess instruction in the general education classroom. Both teachers are actively engaged in instruction at all times, although one or the other may take the lead in specific activities depending on the nature of the lesson, the teachers’ strengths and/or the content. Both teachers may also be involved in supporting small group work throughout the room. Co-teaching requires planning, a good rapport and a mutual respect between the teachers and constant monitoring of student supports to determine when specific supports can be faded. Additional information on co-teaching and in-class support is available at the New Jersey Department of Education Learning Resource Centers. Locations and directions may be found at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/lrc/>.

Inclusion

A universal approach to instruction can also be facilitated by a school **Inclusion initiative**. Inclusive schools have administrators who communicate a clear message that the staff will make every effort to educate students with IEPs in their home school in settings with their typical peers. Inclusive schools have staff members who regularly review placement data, which is recorded for every student by the portion of their day spent with typical peers, to determine who can move to general education settings for a greater portion of their day. Decisions must be made through the IEP process; however, regular school wide data-based decision making can facilitate the implementation of needed supports in general and special education settings that are necessary for the IEP team to be able to transition a child to a less restrictive setting. Many inclusive schools also implement Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) systems to prevent behavior from interfering with learning. For more information on PBS, go to the NJDOE’s web site at <http://www.njpbs.org/>. The Learning Resource Centers are a great source for information on inclusion as well.

Professional Learning Community (PLC)

A **Professional Learning Community** is another venue to facilitate a holistic approach to instruction. A “community” of special and general educators, and child study team members within a school collaboratively develop curricula, plan instructional units and problem-solve in a way that promotes consistency in instruction, assessment and academic and behavioral support across grades and content areas. PLCs can offer opportunities for embedded professional development for teachers and child study team members that is relevant and individualized to meet the needs of the students and educators in the school. For more information on PLCs, go to <http://www.state.nj.us/education/profdev/pd/teacher/>.

These are only a few of the evidence-based initiatives that are improving student outcomes and facilitating an integrated approach to building supports for struggling learners. The New Jersey Department of Education Learning Resource Centers have extensive resources available and assistance with researching these and other evidence-based initiatives that can improve instruction and achievement for students with disabilities and for all students.

★ **TEACHER OF THE YEAR** ★



Kathleen Assini, a social studies teacher from Delsea Regional Middle and High School in Gloucester County, has been named the 2013-2014 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year.

Education is a second career for Kathy, who went to cosmetology school and worked as a hair stylist for over 20 years while raising two children with her husband. Along the way, many signals told her she should become a teacher. Kathy noticed that on school trips, the rowdiest boys were assigned to her because she was the one who could handle them. She also noticed that she was often the mentor and trainer for young cosmetologists. Kathy decided to follow her passion and, in three and a half years, she earned her Bachelor’s Degree and K-12 teaching certificate while working at the salon and raising her family. She is certified in both elementary education and social studies.

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AchieveNJ Updates

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- o **ATSNJ Instrument for Athletic Trainers** - <http://www.atsnj.org/ssatc-evaluation>
- o **NJSICA's New Jersey School Counselor Evaluation Model** - <http://www.njsca.org/content/school-counselor-evaluation-model-released>
- o **NJSHA's Framework for Speech-Language Specialists – Evidence of Effectiveness** - <http://www.njsca.org/members/member-login.html>
Note: NJSHA has a licensing agreement and can only post information to members; the link provided above connects to the membership sign-in page.

- **Evaluation Component and Summative Scoring:**

Teachers are evaluated based on multiple measures of educator practice and student achievement under AchieveNJ. Each element of the evaluation results in a 1 – 4 rating, which is weighted according to the state formula. In order to determine the cut scores for each final rating, the Department partnered with Measurement Inc., a nationally respected assessment consulting firm. Through this partnership, a representative committee of educators convened to participate in a “modified body of work procedure.” New Jersey is a leading state across the nation in setting evaluation performance levels in this deliberate and

collaborative approach and inviting educators to be a part of the process. Over the summer, approximately 90 educators from all over the state (over half of which are practicing classroom teachers) worked for three days analyzing data and making substantive contributions to the summative rating scales. These educators examined anonymous teacher portfolios based on data from evaluation pilot districts to review results from SGOs, observation ratings, and SGP data (if applicable). The educators recommended a set of cut scores, which the Department has chosen to adopt in full for all educators evaluated under AchieveNJ in SY13–14. We are grateful for the experience and expertise shared by the dedicated professionals who participated, and we will release a report summarizing the entire process in the coming months. The Department has created a new [Evaluation Scoring Web Page](#)

(<http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/scoring.shtml>) with resources explaining the calculation of each evaluation component score as well as the final summative rating, including this [Teacher Evaluation Scoring Guide](#).

(<http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/TeacherEvaluationScoringGuide.pdf>). Please review this information to learn more about how your evaluation is scored.

For more information on all components of evaluation, please visit the Department's [AchieveNJ](#) (<http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/>) website.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR *(continued from p. 3)*

Kathy has taught 8th grade social studies to students ranging in ability from special education to honors. She also teaches history in the district's high school alternative program for students whose educational and behavioral problems prohibit their success in a traditional school setting.

Her students know that, although she holds high expectations of them, she is willing to support them in every way. “I measure my accomplishments in education not so much by the number of “A’s” my students earn in class,” Kathy says, “but by the safety and comfort they feel there and their willingness to do their best even when it is not easy.”

“In learning about Kathleen's road to becoming a teacher after a successful first career and raising her family, it is truly inspirational to see how her life experiences made her one of the most caring, effective teachers for all students no matter what their backgrounds,” said Commissioner Cerf. “She learned from every aspect of her life, and she is able to bring that constant personal learning to her teaching in a very positive way. She does believe in every student's ability to succeed.”

Kathy makes full use of technology programs for all of her students and she shares that information with her colleagues. She is heavily involved with training and mentoring, including the new evaluation system. She volunteered to be one of the first teachers observed under AchieveNJ. Her expertise and insight has also been shared with the Department of Education as a member of the Teacher Advisory Panel Pilot.

As it turns out, Kathleen's next door neighbor and good friend is Lynn MacLuskie, the 2010–11 Gloucester County Teacher of the Year. The two of them have shared many conversations over the fence discussing both theory and actual practice. This summer's conversations were focused on SGOs and evaluation, never leaving the students out of their conversations. What a nice perk living right next door to each other to share a fresh outlook on educational topics.

As the 2013–14 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year, Kathleen will embark on a six-month sabbatical at the New Jersey Department of Education starting in January 2014. She will have Lynn MacLuskie right there helping to support her along the way while racking up the unofficial professional development hours standing by the fence between their yards.

Through educator recognition programs such as the Teacher of the Year Program, the New Jersey Department of Education gives well-deserved public attention to the contributions of our state's highly effective teachers. The Department wants to recognize those that are making a difference by providing quality teaching and learning experiences for all students.

There are so many wonderful teachers in New Jersey. We need teachers, parents, and community members to reach out to school and district officials to suggest deserving educators to nominate for Teacher of the Year. **We also strongly encourage every school and district to participate in recognition programs like this one.**

For more detailed information on all the Department's recognition programs, please visit: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/educators/rpr/recognition>.

News, Upcoming Events & Professional Development Opportunities



Be sure to check the online upcoming [events calendar](http://education.state.nj.us/events/) (<http://education.state.nj.us/events/>) for opportunities available throughout the year.

November 2013

November 11-15, 2013 – NATIONAL YOUNG READERS WEEK – Schools across the country celebrate reading by participating in National Young Readers Week from November 11-15, 2013. This is an annual event that was co-founded in 1989 by Pizza Hut® and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Visit www.bookitprogram.com for more information.

November 12, 2013 - WORKFORCE 2025 PARENT CONFERENCE – Time: 4:15 pm to 7:30 pm; Location: Holiday Inn Express, 195 Davidson Avenue, Somerset, NJ 08873

The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation wants to support educators through the introduction of the new state standards and deployment of the PARCC assessments. To that end, they invite high school principals, along with three parents, to attend a FREE Workforce 2025 Parent Conference. To register, go to:

<https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?llr=7gcjqzka&oeidk=a07e8beejsr5c83cae3&oseq=a003h7lpx5nh>. For more information or questions, contact [Patty Cullinane](mailto:patty.cullinane@njchamber.com) (patty.cullinane@njchamber.com), Director of Programs at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation or call 609-789-5279.

November 12, 2013 - KINDERGARTEN SEMINAR (SOUTH) – Time: 9:30 am to 2:30 pm; Location: Camden County Educational Services Commission, 225 White Horse Avenue, Clementon, NJ 08021

Research-based kindergarten best practice – This 5-day regional seminar will provide participating teams of kindergarten teachers and administrators with an introduction to key features of the Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines. The 5-day series will include sessions to support teachers in organizing classroom environments and schedules, implementing developmentally appropriate practices, incorporating the new common core standards and assessments, and applying effective teaching strategies that support children's development and learning. For more information, visit:

<http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=20099>

November 13, 2013 - TRI-STATE QUALITY REVIEW RUBRIC - MATHEMATICS – Time: 8:30 am to 3:30 pm; Location: The National Conference Center - Holiday Inn, 399 Monmouth Street, East Windsor, NJ 08520

Aligning your lesson plans to the Common Core – The Tri-State Quality Review Rubric is an initiative of the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network designed to identify high-quality materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The purpose of this professional development is to train educators in the use of a rubric to evaluate lessons and units in mathematics. Direct instruction, combined with hands-on experience, will be provided during the rubric training. For more information, visit: <http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=20178>

November 14, 2013 - TRI-STATE QUALITY REVIEW RUBRIC - ELA – Time: 8:30 am to 3:30 pm; Location: The National Conference Center - Holiday Inn, 399 Monmouth Street, East Windsor, NJ 08520

Aligning your lesson plans to the Common Core – The Tri-State Quality Review Rubric is an initiative of the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network designed to identify high-quality materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The purpose of this professional development is to train educators in the use of a rubric to evaluate lessons and units in the English language arts. Direct instruction, combined with hands-on experience, will be provided during the rubric training. For more information, visit: <http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=20177>

November 15, 2013 - SUPPORTING OUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS - WARREN/SUSSEX COUNTIES – Time: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm; Location: Centenary College - Front Parlor of the Seay Building, 400 Jefferson Street, Hackettstown, NJ 07840

English Language Learning in New Jersey Public Schools – In keeping with N.J.A.C.6A:15 1.1(c)3,"Coordinate and monitor in conjunction with the county offices of education the local, State and Federal programs designed to meet the educational needs of limited English proficient students," the Sussex and Warren County Offices of Education are pleased to offer the first in a series of regional presentations to aid districts in supporting their English Language Learning population. For more information, visit:

<http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=20179>

State Emergency Information – Call 211

In the event of a statewide emergency such as Hurricane Sandy, district personnel and parents can call the state's emergency response line at 211 for up-to-date information. In addition to the information line, there is a Web site with current information at www.nj211.org

November 20 Or 21, 2013 – IMPLEMENTING PERSONALIZED STUDENT LEARNING PLANS – Time: 8:45 am to 12:00 pm;

Location: see link below

Personalized Student Learning Plans (PSLPs) – The New Jersey Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education will host a half-day professional development workshop for school districts and charter schools interested in implementing Personalized Student Learning Plans (PSLPs). For more information, visit:

<http://education.state.nj.us/events/month/?month=11&year=2013>

December 2013

DRUNK DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH – In memory of those individuals who were killed by drunk drivers, each year December is designated as “Drunk Driving Awareness Month.” Public officials and the citizens of New Jersey are requested to observe the month with appropriate activities and programs. Visit <http://www.madd.org/drun-driving/> for more information.

December 3, 2013 – INCLUSION MASTER TEACHERS AND HEAD START DISABILITIES COORDINATORS – Time: 9:30 am to 2:30 pm;

Location: Learning Resource Center-LRC Central, 200 Riverview Plaza, First Floor LRC Conference Room, Trenton, NJ 08625

2013–2014 Inclusion Master Teacher Updates – Updates on early childhood special education practices and initiatives.

In addition, time will be spent reviewing available modules developed to improve practice in the implementation of specialized instruction to preschool children with disabilities during the routines of the preschool day. For more information, visit:

<http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=20129>

December 3, 2013 – PRIMARY TEACHER WORKSHOP - GRADES K-4 – Time: 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm; Location: Rider University, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648 Utilizing Children's Story Books – Teach academic content; Achieve common core standards; Present concepts of bias, prejudice & bullying; and Integrate controversial & traumatic education. For more information, visit:

<http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=20081>

December 5, 2013 – INTERMEDIATE TEACHER WORKSHOP - GRADES 4 - 8 – Time: 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm; Location: Rider University, 2083 Lawrenceville Road, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648 Using Fiction/Non-Fiction & Simulation Activities in the Classroom – Teach academic content; Achieve common core standards; Address the Holocaust/genocide mandate; and Introduce bullying, bias & prejudice themes. For more information, visit:

<http://education.state.nj.us/events/details.php?recid=20082>

December 10 OR 13, 2013 – DIVERSITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY – Time: 9:30 am to 2:30 pm;

Location: See link below

Diversity in Education – This workshop will explore the role and impact of diversity in education, pertaining to attitudes, relationships, instructional materials and classroom practices. For more information, visit:

<http://education.state.nj.us/events/month/?month=12&year=2013>

December 12, 2013 – FOSTER CHILDREN'S DAY – Designated as “Foster Children's Day” in New Jersey to recognize the unique needs and experiences of foster children and to provide an opportunity for state and local government, private organizations and the general public to engage in charitable efforts which acknowledge that these foster children are important and loved. State and local government, private organizations and all citizens of New Jersey are requested to celebrate “Foster Children's Day” through suitable activities, programs and exercises. For additional resources on foster youth, go to

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/edservices/stability/> or

<http://www.state.nj.us/njfofosteradopt/>

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<http://education.state.nj.us/feature/>

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